

RELIGIO LAICI,
OR A
Lay-mans Faith,
Touching the
SUPREAM HEAD
AND
INFALLIBLE GUIDE
OF THE
CHURCH.
In Two Letters to a Friend in the
Country.

By J. R. A Convert of Mr. Bays's.

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L O N D O N,
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**THE
AUTHOR
TO THE
READER.**

Courteous Reader,

A Little before the late King (of ever Blessed Memory) dyed, a Poem was Published call'd Religio Laici, &c. and not long after another by the same Author call'd the Hind and Panther: Which Pieces (though as opposite to one another as Light and Darknes) fell into an intimate Friends hand of mine, who knowing me a great Admirer of that Authors Poems, writ to me to desire my Judgment, touching the Infallibility of his Mocher Hind, which was the occasion of the following Letters, which indeed has been long since writ; and the Reasons why they were not Published before are two: The first is the same which a late Reverend Author gave in his Reasons for taking away the Test (viz.) They were design'd for a private use: The second was my fear (through a

knowledge of my own Inability) of a good Cause suffering by the weakness of its Advocate; but however the Importunity of my Worthy Friend, to whom I writ, did at last prevail with me to send them thus (as we all came) Unpolished into the World. And as you have found them (without Prejudice if possible) read them, and if you meet with any thing that makes amends for the pains I have my End, if not I am sure you miss Yours.

R E A D E R.

CONTEOUS Reader,

J. R. A. I write before the late King (of ever Blessed Memory) died a Poem was Published call'd Religious Laici, &c. and not long after another by the same Author call'd the Hind and Panther: Which Pieces (though as opposite to one another as Light and Darkness) fell into an intimate Friends hand of mine, who knowing me a great Admirer of that Authors Poems, writ to me to deliver my Judgment touching the Justifiability of his Mother Hind, which was the occasion of the following Letters, which indeed had been long since writ: and the Reason why they were not Published before was this: The first is the Answer of a late Reverend Author given in his Reply for taking away the Telf (viz.) They were designed for a private use: The second was my fear (through a

THE FIRST
LETTER.

SIR,

THE many and never to be forgotten Favours I have receiv'd commands a ready Compliance to your Request, of giving you my Opinion touching the Doctrine of Infallibility, so universally receiv'd and believ'd in the Church of *Rome*, though at the same time they differ amongst themselves where to fix this Infallible Guide; some are for placing it in a General Council, others in his Holiness and Council together, and a third sort in the defusive Church, and a fourth in the Person of the Pope only, he being *St. Peter's* Successor, to whom our Saviour gave (as they say) the power of the Keys, &c. But however though they differ in the Manner, yet they do all agree in the Matter, that such a Convenient Doctrine should belong to their Church; and truly I cannot blame them for it, for it is indeed the only Rock and Foundation on which all their other Rubbish and Fopperies are built; and the Removal of it would be like *Sampson's* pulling down the Pillars or main Prop, so that consequently the whole Fabrick would fall to the Ground: But this being a *Herculian* work more proper for the sam'd Heroes of our Age (*viz.*) Men of great Parts and Letters, I had not so much as attempted it, but only, Sir, in obedience to your Command, in doing which 'tis possible I may put a helping hand toward the removal of
B some

some trash and trumpery out of the way, whereby others of my own mean Rank and Capacity may the better discern the weaknels of this *Babel* Foundation, which has made such a Confusion in the Christian World. And amongst all the late Learned Pieces in Vindication of this *Sovereign Antidote* (viz.) *Infallibility* (for if swallow'd, it would without doubt expect the Poyson, of all the other Pestilential Doctrins of that Church;) none has made a greater noise in the World than the last, though least unlearn'd Piece of the most famous celebrated Author Mr. *Bays* (the new Adopted Champion of the *Roman Catholick* Cause) by the Name and Title of the *Hind and Panther*, writ in the true Dialect and Language of the *Beast J. D.* in which he proves the necessity of an Unerring Guide, as plain as a Pike-staff (or rather as Demonstrable as Transubstantiation is made out, in a late Reverend Authors Reasons for taking away the *Test*). Now for an Unletter'd Lay-man to engage with this *Mighty Sampson* of an Author, is as rash an Undertaking as little *David's* fighting with *Great Goliath* without Armour.

But we read (*Ecclesiastes* the 9th. and 11th.) *The Race is not always to the swift nor the Battel to the strong*; therefore in hopes of being assisted by him whose Cause it is (namely the Lord of Hosts) through whom *David* not only fought, but overcame the *Champion* of the *Philistines*, I enter the Field, and if I perish I perish; however the attempt of great things is Honourable. And the Method I shall take to engage this Potent Adversary, shall be first to fight him with his own Weapons, and discharge his own Artillery upon him, viz. his own Arguments; when he was (possible) of another Opinion (I had almost said Religion, but I am Inclimable to believe he never had any.) Secondly, I shall examine those Places of Scripture which the Papists do most insist upon for the Proof of their Infallible Doctrine, &c. but I will begin with the first, and Arm my self with Mr. *Bays's* own Armour of Proof that he has formerly engag'd with, against the Asserters of this Doctrine, in a Poem of his call'd *Religio Laici*:

Laici : In the Preface of which he has (Page the 4th.) these words, viz. *For having laid down as a Foundation, that the Scripture is a Rule; that in all things needful to Salvation, it is clear, sufficient, and ordain'd by God Almighty for that purpose, I have left my self no right to Interpret obscure Places, because whatsoever is obscure is concluded not necessary to be known :* On which, as a Rock, I shall (being of the same Opinion) Erect and build my Faith ; and that it may the better hold out a Siege against the mighty Host of Wild Beasts, Commanded by their Infallible Mother *Hind*, I will fortifie it with such strong murdering Morter-peices, (of his own, &c.) that I'll defie all his Bears and Boars, his Woolves and Tygers, his Foxes and Asses, and Lyons, &c. to demolish and pull it down. And the first is the Case which he puts between a *Socinian* and them of his own Church ; what that was then, you will best understand from his own Arguments, which are (I think) as strong, and he as much Inspir'd when he writ them, as when he writ the (Immortal Milk white) *Hind and Panther* ; but be your own Judge *Religio Laici*, Page the 20.

*We hold and prove from Scripture plain
That Christ is God, the bold Socinian
From the same Scripture urges he's but Man. }
Now what Appeal can end the Important suit,
Both parts talk loudly, but the Rule is mute ;
Shall I speak plain, and in a Nation free,
Assume an honest Lay-mans Liberty ?*

(which I hope is as little a fault now, by Virtue of his Majesties Gracious Declaration, as it was when *Bays* did it.)

*I think (According to my little Skill,
But to my own Mother Church submitting still)
That many have been sav'd, and many may,
That never heard this question brought in play.*

*The Unletter'd Christian, that believes in gross,
Plods on to Heaven and nere is at a loss;
For the strait Gate wou'd be made straiter yet,
Were none admitted there but Men of Wit.*

(And Page the 22, 23, and 24.)

*The partial Papist wou'd infer from hence,
Their Church in last resort should judge the Sence :
But first they wou'd assume with wondrous Art,
Themselves, to be the whole, who are but part
Of that vast Frame the Church, but grant they were
The Handers down, wou'd they from thence infer
A right to Interpret ? or wou'd they alone,
Who brought the Present, claim it for their own ?
The Book's a common Largis to Maukind,
Not more for them than every Man design'd.
The welcome news is in the Letter found,
The Carrier's not Commission'd to expound ;
It speaks it self, and what it does contain,
In all things needful to be known is plain.
In times o're-grown with Rust and Ignorance,
A gainful Trade their Clergy did advance,
When want of Learning made the Lay-man low,
And none but Priest was Authoriz'd to know ;
When what small knowledge was, in them did dwell,
And he a God that could but read or spell ;
Then Mother Church did mightily prevail,
She parcell'd out the Bible by Retail :
But still Expounded what she sold or gave,
To keep it in her power to damn or save.
Scripture was scarce, and as the Market went,
Poor Lay-men took Salvation on content,
As needy Men takes Money : good or bad
Gods word they had not, but the Priests they had.*

Yet what ere false Conveyances they made,
 The Lawyer still was certain to be paid.
 In those dark Times they learn'd their knack so well,
 That by long use they grew Infallible.

A very short but fair and full account how and by what Methods (if they will believe their Champion Bays) they arriv'd to be the Infallible Church; but he goes on.

*At last a knowing age began to 'nquire
 Whether they the Book, or that did them Inspire;
 And making narrower search, they found, tho late,
 That what they thought the Priest's was their Estate;
 Taught by the will, produc'd the written Word,
 How long they had been Cheated on Record;
 Then every Man who saw the Title fair,
 Claims a Childs Part, and puts in for a share;
 Consulting soberly their private good,
 So sav'd themselves as cheap as e're they cou'd.*

That is to say Good buy Mr. Infallible Indulgences, they did not care to be cheated any longer with such a chargeable sort of Doctrine: And now I'll appeal to all unprejudic'd Persons, whether Mr. Bays has prov'd the Infallibility of the Church of Rome in his Fable of the *Hind and Panther*, better than he has the contrary in his (much better Poem) *Religio Laici*; but it may be objected he was of another Judgment then, which is easily granted, and that (possible) the same Reasons that prevail'd with him to alter it now, might oblige him not to part with it before; for indeed Solomon (which I presume was as Wise a Man as Mr. Bays) says *There is a time for all things*; and though Mr. Bays has (for some Reasons best known to himself) chang'd his Opinion, in grace of God his Religion may be still the same it was when he writ his *Religio Laici*, in the late Kings time; nay, for ought any body knows, it may be still the same it was in his great Patron Cromwel's

Cromwell's days, for they two did much alike admire Priests, for one made them (like *Jereboam*) of the meanest of the People, and Mr. *Bays* made them to be all alike Cheats and Impostors; for his only Celebrated Poem of *Abolam* and *Achitophel* (which chang'd his Principles from Wiggism to Toryism, he begins with his never failing kindness to the Priests b(Page 1. line 1.)

In Pious times e're Priest-Craft did begin, &c.

So by a Penny we know how a Shilling is made; for by Priest-Craft he makes no distinction, but takes them all in from *Dan* to *Bersheba*, as if no Religion could be good where a Priest was concern'd, and he gives you partly a Reason for it in the same Poem, and what it was that put

————— *The Priesthood in a flame,
For Priests of all Religions are the same.*

Which compar'd with his Priest-craft in the first Line of that Poem, is as much as to say they are all a company of Crafty K——s, which is a Note beyond Elia, and possible Mr. *Bays* might hug himself in that copious Thought; for by Priests of all Religions Infallibility it self is included, which is very bold indeed; but possible he may think 'tis not so bold as brave, because it shews a generous Temper, and that he was not partial in his Estimation of the Priests, &c.

And to let us see he was not in jeast, he has (to his Eternal Praise) drawn the Picture of them all in one Piece; that I question whether the fam'd *Apelle's* Picture of *Venus* (which 'tis said was Seven years a doing) was more nice and lively Painted than *Bays's* Plump *Spanish*, (and most Catholick Fryer) for any body that views that Piece may very easily guess at his design, of halting in by Head and Shoulders that unnecessary Character, to compleat his double discovery, &c. Well, Mr. *Bays*, though you say in the Preface to your

Medall,

Medall, Sign-post Painting will serve to remember a Friend by, yet I must tell you, you have neither spar'd cost nor pains, but have been extravagantly lavish in Painting your (beloved) Priests; but I presume the Reason was your Charity to your poor Brethren the Laity, that they might beware of having any thing to do with them, and that possible might induce you to publish your own Creed in 82, giving it the Title of the *Lay-mans Faith*, in which you insinuate the unreasonableness of pinning our Faith upon the Priests Sleeves; and truly as to that you have made an absolute Convert of me, for I am much of your mind; for ~~these Priests~~ have, and still do make Bloody work amongst us, by endeavouring to impose upon our Understandings; yet I must needs confess I am not altogether of your Judgment, for I am willing to believe there are Priests of some Religions that are very honest and have no ill designs: But your *Religio Laici* has made me almost of your Perswasion; and I am very apt to believe that Poem has gain'd you more Proselytes than your *Hind and Panther*; for it is not a little diverting to see how you have their maul'd and worried (beyond any *English* Mastiff at the Bear-garden) the poor Pope and his Bulls; which puts me in mind of what you said in your *Medall* upon another occasion, which with a little variation will serve here,

*The Man who laugh'd but once to see an Ass
Mumbl'ing, to make the Cross-grain'd Thistle pass,
Might laugh again to see the Papist chaw
The Prickles of unpallatable Law.*

And I am apt to believe were that Philosopher alive, he would as readily laugh to see Persons swallow so greedily some things now, which but a little while ago none but Asses would venture so much as to chaw them, by reason of their pricking and choaking quality. But to give the Devil his due, I must needs own Mr. *Bays* has a most powerful and luxurious hand at Satyr, and may challenge all Christendom to match him;
for

for indeed I never in my slender Province met with any that was to compare with him, (unless that unknown (but supposed) worthy Author, that writ to him upon his (at last) turning Roman Catholick (for *Bay*s like the Vicar of *Bray*, in *Henry* the 8th. *Edward* the 6th. *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth's* days, was resolved to keep his Place) and the quoting an Author to the purpose, is the same thing (the Learned say) as if it was his own; and that will I hope excuse my putting them down here.

Thou Mercenary Runnegade, thou Slave,
Thou ever Changing, still to be a Knave;
What Set, what Error wilt thou next disgrace?
Thou art so lude, so scandalously Base,
That Antichristian Popery may be
Asham'd of such a Proselite as thee.
Not all thy Rancor or Felonious Spite,
Which animates thy lumpish Soul to write,
Could ha' contriv'd a Satyr more severe,
Or more disgrace the Cause thou wouldst prefer;
Yet in thy favour this must be confest
It suits with thy Poetick Genius best;
There thou

To Truths disus'd mayst entertain
Thy self with Stories more fanciful and vain
Then ere thy Poetry could ever fain;
Or sing the Lives of thy own fellow Saints,
'Tis a large Field and thy assistance wants;
Thence Copy out new Operas for the Stage,
And with their Miracles direct the Age.
Such is thy Faith, if Faith thou hast indeed,
For well we may suspect the Poets Creed;
Rebel to God, Blasphemer o' thy King,
Ah, tell whence cou'd this strange Compliance spring:
So mayst thou prove to thy new Gods, as true
As thy old Friend the Devil has been to you;

Yet Conscience and Religion's your pretence,
 But Food and Drink the Methologick Sense.
 Ah, how persuasive is the want of Bread,
 Not Reasons from Strong Box more strongly plead:
 A Convert thou, 'tis past all belicoving,
 'Tis a damn'd scandal of thy Foes contriving;
 A Jest of that malicious manstrome Faque,
 The Honest Lay-man's Faith is still the same,

And so much for Mr. Bays, for he has already detain'd me a little too long from what I chiefly intended; but since his Arguments were so strong and pertinent to my purpose, I judg'd it not amiss to have my Opinion favour'd by so Eminent an Author of their own, which I made use of only as an Introduction to the more serious and useful part, namely, what I promis'd in the beginning of the Letter (*viz.*) the Examining those Places of Scripture which the Papists do most insist on for proving their Church or the Pope, (no matter which) Infalible. But I fear I have already transgress'd the Bounds of a Letter, and therefore I shall reserve the rest till another opportunity, in the mean time I shall Subscribe my self,

Sir,

Yours to Command so far

As in the power lies of your oblig'd

J. R.

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THE

THE SECOND LETTER.

SIR, I Have Receiv'd yours, and am not a little proud at your gracious Acceptance of my last, which gives me no small Encouragement of giving you the trouble of a second, which I hope will give you a full satisfaction of what my poor Sentiments are, touching the Doctrine of Infallibility; which indeed is the second Part to the same Tune, only with this difference;

*Neither Mr. Bays nor his Banter,
Of his Milk white Hind and Panther*

is at all concern'd in this; for though *Bays's* Reasons and Arguments are strong and to the purpose, yet with those of our Saviours and the Apostles, I did not judg it necessary they should be Transcrib'd in one Letter, no more than I thought them fit to be nam'd in the same day; and that was the Reason, Sir, of my giving you a double trouble; but without any more Preamble I will endeavour to make good my Promise in my last (*viz.*) the examining those Places of Scripture which are made use of for the proving the Doctrine of Infallibility, and likewise those Places (which all Honest and sincere Protestants ought to consider) that plainly prove the contrary. I will begin first with those Pla-

ces, or rather that Place (for I can find but one that seems so much as to favour the Point in Hand) which is Matthew the 16: and the 17, 18, and 19. Verses, *Then Jesus answer'd and said unto Peter, blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven: And I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.*

In which words the Romanist do believe St. Peter to be made the Infalible Head of the Church, &c. as sure as the Wafer after Consecration is transubstantiated into the Corporeal substance of our Blessed Lords Body; and upon that account it is, the pretended Successors of St. Peter has Lorded it over, not only their Fellow Bishops, but all Christian Princes and Crown'd Heads; but upon what Grounds *this more than Sovereign Authority* has been set up and practised, I shall now inquire, and I do not question but to make it appear from our Saviours own words, that he neither meant or intended any such Power and Authority to be set up by his Disciples and Followers, as is at this day exercised by some body in the World, &c. and that will plainly appear if we consider the occasion of those words of our Saviour to St. Peter, which was the Question our Saviour ask'd (not St. Peter but) all the Disciples (*Mat.* the 16. and 13. ver.) *When Jesus came into the Coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his Disciples, saying, Whom do men say, that I, the Son of Man, am.* Now it is not to be supposed that our Saviour asked them because he did not know as well as they what the Peoples thoughts were concerning him, but in all probability it was to draw a Confession of their own Opinion of him; for in the 13. ver. *He saith unto Them, but whom say Ye that I am;* then we find ver. the 16th. *And Simon Peter answer'd and said, thou art Christ the Son of the living God;* upon which account it was

that our Saviour, in the next verse said, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, &c.* so that it is plain our Saviours words had Relation to all the rest of the Disciples, whose Answer it was, though St. Peter (like a Foreman of a Jury) deliver'd it as the Belief and Sentiments of them all; for we find (as I before observ'd) the question was put to them all, but it would be unreasonable to suppose they should (as in a rout) answer we all, all, one and all, do believe, &c. but they being all present, without contradicting St. Peter, 'tis not to be question'd but that they did All believe and own the same thing; so that it would be some violence offer'd to that place of Scripture, to understand our Saviour meant the Person of St. Peter, and not the Confession, which (in the behalf of them all) he deliver'd, being so happy (as he was always very forward) to speak first: and it is not unreasonable to suppose, that if any of the other Disciples had said the same thing, our Saviours answer would have been the same likewise. And that our Saviour did not intend those words to be understood, as some would have them, will better appear if we consider two things: First the great caution that our Blessed Saviour gave, with the care and pains he took upon all occasions, to prevent his Disciples entertaining so much as a Notion of that Nature: And, Secondly, a positive Command to the contrary. As to the first we find in St. Mark the 9. and 33. our Saviour asking his Disciples *What it was they were disputing of among themselves by the way; but they held their peace, &c.* and well they might, for they knew they had been disputing upon a rong Topick, for the matter was no less than who amongst them should be the greatest, as you may read ver. the 34. and in the next ver. we have our Saviours answer, *And he sat down and called (I pray mark) the Twelve, and saith unto them, if any Man desire to be first the same shall be last of all, and Servant of all.* From which we may observe the early care our Saviour took to prevent this Doctrine of Exercising Authority over one another; and though it was possible but a Dis-

course

course to pass away the time as they were coming to *Capernaum*, yet our Blessed Lord, that knew their thoughts as well as their dispute, takes an occasion to crush this *Cockatrice* in the Egg, that it might not reign in his Spiritual Kingdom; for no doubt he did foresee the ill Consequence of it. But were this Doctrine of such important use as some would make it, one would think nothing had been more necessary for the Peace and Good of the Christian Church, than the Doctrine of *St. Peter* and his Successors Infallibility to have been deliver'd to the World, so plain (as is indeed the contrary) that it could not admit of a Dispute. And therefore for our Saviour and the Apostles to be (if I may so say) wanting in a matter of so great concern, appears to me wonderful strange; and it is not to be doubted, that if such an *Infallible Guide and Head* of the Church had been necessary, our Blessed Lord, whose design and purpose of coming into the World was to do and procure for us all imaginable good, would not have been wanting in instituting so convenient a Determiner of all Controversie, nor likewise sparing of his pains in the instructing and directing us how and where to find this *Balm of Gilead*, this *Philosophers Stone*, which is able to refine and cure all the Distempers and Divisions of the Christian World about the true Worship of God, &c. Besides, had Almighty God design'd his Church such a particular Head, how unreasonable would it be to suppose our Saviour should be ignorant of it; and if the contrary, to conceal it from his Disciples, especially at this time, when they were contending (as it were about the same thing) who amongst them should be the greatest: And without all doubt had our Saviour design'd to have invested *St. Peter* with such a Power, he would have acquainted them with it, and would (as this had been a very fit time) have told them, they need not trouble themselves about those unnecessary Disputes, for there was one amongst them that was already design'd and intended to be the Rock and only Foundation on which he would build his Church, and so consequently their Principal Head and Governour

vernour, and they ought to respect him and his Successors accordingly. But as there is no Footsteps or Place of Scripture to warrant our Belief of any thing of this kind, let us inquire whether there be any to the contrary, which is the second thing to be consider'd, (*viz.*) our Saviours positive Command to his Disciples, that they should not exercise any such Authority, &c. and that will more plainly appear in the 20th. of St. Matt. and the 20. and 21. verses, *When the Mother of Zebedees Children came to desire that her two Sons might sit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, of our Blessed Saviour in his Kingdom, we find all the rest mov'd with Indignation against the two Brethren* (for their Ambition of being exalted above their Fellows) and though 'tis reasonable to suppose this desire was ground'd upon a mistake of Christs Kingdom (which the Jews, nay the very Disciples themselves, at that time did believe it, a Temporal one) yet we find our Saviour takes care to rectifie both their mistakes and ambitious Temper of Mind, of being exalted one above another, which was by no means to be practis'd amongst them, as you may read from the 25th. to the 29th. of the same 20th. of St. Matthew. But Jesus called them unto him and said, *Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministr'd unto, but to minister, and give his Life a Ransom for many.* To the same purpose in St. Mark the 10th. from the 42. to the 46. and in St. Luke the 22. and the 25. and 26. Verses, and so on; by all which Places, and many more to the same purpose, we may observe the more than ordinary care our Saviour took to cure this Epidemical Distemper that had began to infect them in his days; that they might be the better prepar'd to follow his Example, especially in that humble, peaceable Temper of Mind, &c. The consideration of which one would think is sufficient

sufficient to convince any Rational Creature of the unreasonable pretence of the pretended Successors of St. Peter's claiming a Supream Power and Authority, not only in Ecclesiastical matters, but Temporal over all Christian Kings and Princes, pretending they hold their Authority by Vertue of the Popes Grace and Favour, and that he can depose one and set up another as he thinks fit. And that this is no new Notion, you shall hear what my Brother Lay-man says to the same purpose, in the Preface to his FAITH, Page the 5th. *How can we be secure from the practice of Jesuited Papists in that Religion; for not two or three of that Order, as some of them would impose upon us, but almost the whole Body of them are of Opinion, that their Infallible Master has a Right over Kings, not only in Spirituals but Temporals; not to name Mariana, Bellarmine, Emanuel Si. Molina, Santarel Simancha, and at the least, Twenty others of Foreign Countries: We can produce of our own Nation, Champion, and Doleman or Parsons; besides many are nam'd whom I have not read, who all of them attest this Doctrine, that the Pope can depose and give away the Right of any Sovereign Prince, Si vel paulum deflexerit, if he shall never so little warp; but if he once comes to be Excommunicated, then the Bond of Obedience is taken off from Subjects, and they may and ought to drive him like another Nebuchadnezzar, ex hominum Christianorum Dominatu, from Exercising Dominion over Christians; and to this they are bound by Virtue of Divine Precept, and by all the Tyes of Conscience, under no less Penalty than Damnation. Which is more than our Saviour and the Apostles ever taught or pretended to, but the contrary is very evident; and to that purpose St. Paul in the 13th. to the Romans ver. the 1. says, Let every Soul be subject unto the Higher Powers; &c. which Power is there understood the Supream Magistrate, and ver. 6. For this cause pay you Tribute also, for they are Gods Ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. And to the same purpose St. Peter himself Commands this Duty, Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lords sake; whether it be to the King as Supream, or unto*

Governours.

Governours as unto them that are sent by him, &c. the first Epistle of Peter the 2. chap. the 13. and 14. verses, So that 'tis plain who the Apostles call *Supream*, and whom our blessed Lord, own'd, does appear by his putting himself to the Charge of a Miracle, lest he should offend. But this was a great while ago, and the Cause and the Times alter'd, and another sort of a Supremacy set up, which was not known in those days, nor till many Centuries after; for if St. Peter had been invested with any such Authority (as his pretended Successors pretend too) certainly our Saviour or the Apostles would in some manner one time or other have taken notice of it; but for our Hearts we cannot find any such thing. But to oblige our *Roman* Friends, I will examine the Matter a little farther, and the better to inform our selves of this great Point, we will take a view of our Saviours treating St. Peter after this suppos'd Prerogative deliver'd him; in the same 16th. of St. Matthew (where our Saviour is supposed to give St. Peter only the Power of the Keys) we find our Blessed Lord telling his Disciples what he was to suffer, &c. *From that time forth began Jesus to shew to his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* Then St. Peter took him and began to rebuke him saying, *Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee,* ver. the 21. and 22. but pray mark our Saviours answer (to this Infallible Head) in the next verse; *But he turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* By which it appears it was not the Person, but the great Truth in the Confession, which he deliver'd in the behalf of himself and the rest, that was the Rock our Saviour would build his Church, &c. which indeed is a good and strong Foundation, such a one as our Saviour speaks of in the 7th. of St. Matthew, the 24. and 25. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his House upon a Rock; and the*

Rain

Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House; but it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock; which Parable is understood of a good Christians Faith, which will hold out against the Storms and Tempests of Persecution, which all good Christians will do, whose Faith is built upon that Confession of St. Peters (viz.) Thou art Christ the Son of the living God, which as a good and strong Foundation, will support all the rest of our Creed, and therefore by an Allegorical Expression call'd a Rock, which must be understood in a Spiritual Sense, on which Christ would erect his Spiritual Kingdom. Agreeable is that place of St. Paul, Ephesians the 2. and the 19. and 20. verses, Now therefore ye are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone. So that here 'tis plain, and beyond all dispute, that the Apostles and Prophets were the Rock and Foundation, that is to say, the Faith and Doctrine which they did profess and teach (and not their Persons) was the Rock and Foundation that both our Saviour and St. Paul meant, on which the Christian Church was built; if otherwise, why should he omit telling them they were built upon St. Peter, that Rock and Head of the Church? and so of the rest; but we see he takes no more notice of St. Peter than the rest. Besides, there is little reason to suppose our Saviour shou'd mean the Person of St. Peter, when he so well knew the weakness of that Foundation; for tho' he was indeed very forward upon all occasions, as his attempting to go to our Saviour when he was walking on the Sea, yet we find this presumptive Faith soon fail'd him, for he was forc'd to implore our Saviour's Assistance, by crying out, Lord help me or I perish: And again, notwithstanding his Resolution to dye rather than deny his Lord, &c. yet we find our Saviour telling him, Matthew the 26. and 34. verse, Before the Cock crow he shou'd deny him thrice; in all which we do not find any more notice taken of St. Peter by our Sa-

viour than of any of the other Disciples, unless it were to re-
 prove him for his want of Faith and other Faults. And we may
 observe further that on all occasions our Saviour was not want-
 ing in cautioning his Disciples, not only to forbear setting up
 such an Authority (as we have been treating of) amongst them,
 but likewise commanded all Obedience to be given to the
 Supream Powers that was then in the World: and from thence
 it was that he reprov'd St. Peter's rashness in drawing his
 Sword, though he did it with design to defend him against
 those that came to apprehend him, *John* the 18. ver. the 11.
Then said Jesus unto Peter, put up thy Sword, &c. and he
 gives the reason for it, ver. the 36. *Jesus answer'd, my King-
 dom is not of this world, if my Kingdom were of this world,
 then would my Servants fight, that I should not be deliver'd to
 the Jews; but now is my Kingdom not from hence;* which
 I think is a very powerful Argument against him who calls
 himself Christ's Vicar, and Lords it over all the Kingdoms of
 the World, contrary to Christ's Command, and the Practice
 of the Apostles and Primitive Christians for almost a Thou-
 sand years after Christ. But to proceed, since we cannot
 find, in all the time of our Saviours being with his Disciples
 in the Flesh, any thing to warrant our belief of St. Peter's be-
 ing the Head, &c. We will go one step further, and inquire
 if after his Resurrection (which was the accomplishment and
 Confirmation of all he had deliver'd to them) whether he
 did deliver to St. Peter any Power or Commission, more than
 he did to any of the rest of his Disciples. In the three last
 verses of the 28th. of St. *Matthew* we thus read, *All power is
 given unto me in heaven and in earth, go. Ye therefore and teach
 all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of
 the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all
 things whatsoever I command you; and loe I am with you even
 to the end of the world.* Now 'tis granted that here is a Com-
 mission given; but to whom? was it deliver'd to Pe-
 ter, James or John? &c. No, but to them all, in those words
Go Ye, &c. Neither do we find any distinction, though
 St.

St. Peter and all the rest, was there at the same time, as you may read verses the 16th. and 17th. of that Chapter; Then the Eleven Disciples went away to Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; and when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And in St. Mark the 16th. and the 14th. and 15. verses, And afterward he appeared unto the Eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto THEM, go YE into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. So that here is again the same Commission, but without any Preheminence given to either of them. St. Luke makes no mention of this Matter: And for that Place of St. John which the Romantics brag so much of from our Saviour, bidding St. Peter three times feed his Sheep; it is I think impossible to be understood as if from thence our Saviour intended Him to be the Head and Chief of the Apostles; but rather, as it is most probable, to strengthen his Faith, that he might be the better enabled to go through with a difficult Work; for we find our Saviour telling him in the two following verses, being the 15th. and 16th. of the last of St. John, What he was to suffer for his sake, &c. So that it is very reasonable to suppose that our Saviour's knowing his weakness from his former denying him, might upon that account lay a more strict Command upon him than any of the rest. Besides, it is not unreasonable to suppose from those words of our Saviour (viz.) Simon Son of John I tell thee, which was as oft repeated as his bidding him Feed his Sheep, might be to upbraid him for his former denying him, whereby he might take notice he had given our Blessed Lord sufficient reason to doubt; and as he had (notwithstanding his Resolution to the contrary) deny'd him with Oaths and Imprecations three several Times: So possible that might be one great Reason why our Saviour did likewise trouble his Commands, &c. And to me it appears plain, that our Saviour's triple Command of bidding St. Peter Feed his

Sheep, can have no Relation to his being made Head of the Church, notwithstanding that Papistical objection (*viz.*) to whom did our Saviour lo oft bid *Feed his Sheep*, &c, which objection I must needs say is a very strong sheepish one, though at the same time I know it is urg'd as a strong Argument, to confirm (as they say) the Commission which our Saviour gave to *St. Peter* in those words, (*viz.*) *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock*, &c. And they tell us our Saviour's giving such a particular charge to *St. Peter*, must import something more than ordinary, which indeed is very true, and I think the reason as plain; for, as I before observ'd, our Saviour well knowing his Faith wanted his special assistance, took more than ordinary care that his Faith might be agreeable to his Confession (which indeed was the *Rock* our Saviour meant) and to that purpose we read in the *22. of St. Luke* the 31. and 32. verses. *And the Lord said, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy Faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.* By which words we find he was not as yet converted, nor indeed any of them, until after the Resurrection; for as our Saviour had foretold, *Matthew* the 26. verse the 31. *I will smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep of the flock shall be scatter'd abroad.* So after the Jews had put our Saviour to death, we find them disper'd and scatter'd up and down, for indeed they could not tell well what to make of the matter, as appears by the discourse our Saviour had with some of them as they were going to *Emmaus*, which was distant from Jerusalem some three-score Furlongs, *Luke* the 24. from the 13. to the 25. verse, and at the 21. verse, *But we trusted that it had been He which should have Redeemed Israel*, &c. By which it appear'd they was still in doubt; but after Christ's Ascension and sending the Holy Ghost, the promised Comforter, amongst them, we find they were very bold and couragious, and some thousands was converted, *Acts* the 2. and the 41. at *St. Peter's* first Sermon; from which some Learned Men have understood those words,

words, *Upon this Rock I will build my Church*, &c. as a particular favour of our Saviours to St. Peter, in making him the first Instrument of laying the Foundation of his Church, not at *Rome*, but *Jerusalem* (which indeed was the Mother Church) and as our Saviour was to the Jews, so may the misunderstanding that Place of Scripture (*viz.*) *Upon this Rock*, &c. be a stumbling Block (possibly) to the Papist. And for those words of our Saviours bidding St. Peter *feed his Sheep*, it cannot possibly, without taking leave of our Understandings, be understood as our *Roman* Friends would persuade us; but much rather from their being so oft repeated, we may reasonable gather our Saviours purpose was, they should make the greater and deeper impression in his Heart, that so he might not forget this his last Command, as he forgot him *Matthew* the 26. 72. ver. *And again he deny'd him with an oath, I do not know the Man*. And so much shall suffice for our inquiry, how or in what manner our Saviour, both before and after his Resurrection, took notice of St. Peter more than of the rest of his Disciples, in Relation to his being the Chief and Head of the Church. But the better to understand this Infallible Point, which is of so great concern, that if gain'd, it would be like a General's taking the Metropolis of a Kingdom, all the little Towns and Villages would fall in in course. I will go one step further, and inquire whether the Apostles themselves did know or believe any such thing in their Time; for certainly if St. Peter had been invested with any such Power, they could not be ignorant of it; and that time (*viz.*) after Christs Ascension into Heaven, and sending the Holy Ghost, was the most proper to have put it in Execution. But in the prosecution of this I shall make two Inquiries; First, Whether St. Peter did assume or take upon him any such Power and Authority above the rest of the Apostles? And, secondly, Whether the rest did give Place or any Preheminence to St. Peter, as believing him to be their Chief and Head? and if neither of these two things do appear, I hope it will sufficiently clear the

the Point in hand. I will begin with the first, Whether St. Peter did assume any such Power? &c. after the Disciples return from seeing our Saviour taken up into Heaven, *Acts* the 1. and 13. verse, we thus read, *And when they were come in, they went up into an upper-room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the Son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the Brother of James;* which indeed is all the Eleven, but without any manner of distinction, which certainly would have been a great fault in St. Luke (the supposed Author of the *Acts*) had he known St. Peter to have been the Head, &c. And again when the Apostles met to chuse one in the room of him which betrayed our Lord, verse the 23. and 24. *And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias; And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord which knowest the Hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen. And verse the 26. THEY gave forth their Lots, and the Lot fell upon Matthias, and he was number'd with the eleven Apostles.* From which it is evident St. Peter did not assume any Power above the rest in this matter, though it was of so great concern as the chusing an Apostle, but did only act equally with the rest, as appears by those words before recited (*viz.*) *And THEY appointed, and THEY gave forth their Lots, &c.* So that from hence 'tis reasonable to suppose that neither St. Peter nor the rest of the Apostles did so much as dream of such a Power lodg'd in any one of them, for if they had, one would think then it had been as proper a time to have made use of it as any since; and then upon such an occasion it had been rational for the Evangelist to have given the Account of that matter thus (*viz.*) St. Peter the Chief of the Apostles and Head of the Church, &c. did Summons the Rest to attend and be present, at HIS Chusing or Consecrating a Person whom HE judg'd fit to be Ordain'd a Witness with them (in the room of Judas) of our Blessed Lord's Resurrection. This, as it would have been to the purpose, so likewise it would

would have been highly necessary at that time, for then the rest of the Apostles would not only have known this great Prerogative of St. Peter, but likewise how to have behav'd themselves accordingly, and also to have instructed their Followers in the like Obedience to him and his Successors. But to proceed, in the second of the *Acts* we read of the Holy Ghost's descending verse the 3. and 4. *And there appeared unto THEM Cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sat upon (I pray mark, not one, St. Peter only, but) EACH of THEM, and THEY were ALL filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave THEM utterance;* where by the way we may take notice the Evangelist still keeps to his Rule of giving an impartial account; for in this place also he tells us the Holy Ghost made no distinction, notwithstanding St. Peter's being present, *but sat upon EACH, and THEY were ALL filled, &c.* And in the third of the *Acts* verse the 6. we find St. Peter cure a Man that had been lame from his Mothers Womb; yet St. John's being present, he does not assume, as if he only in the Name of Jesus had done it, but makes St. John a Copartner and instrumental in it, as you may observe upon the Peoples being gather'd together ver. the 11. and 12. *And when Peter saw it, he answer'd unto the People, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so earnestly on US, as though by OUR own Power or Holiness WE had made this man to walk:* In which Place no less than three times he speaks in the Plural Number, (*viz.*) *US, OUR and WE, &c.* which plainly shews, that neither St. Peter's humble Temper nor Spirit does reign in his pretended Successors. And so much shall serve for the first Inquiry, whether St. Peter did take upon him or assume any such Infallible Power, &c. The second is, Whether the Apostles did give Place or Preheminence to St. Peter as believing him to be their Chief and Head of the Church, &c. *When the High-Priest, and those that were with him (which was the Sect of the Sadduces) had laid hands on the Apostles, and put them into the Common Prison, the Angel of the Lord by night opened.*

opened the Prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said, go stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this Life: And when THEY heard it, THEY enter'd the Temple, &c. as you may read *Acts* the 5. from the 17. to the 22. verse; in all which we do not find any difference, but an equal Power and Authority was deliver'd to them all. But 'tis possible the *Romanist* may object against the Commission given by this Angel, and say, 'tis the same that St. Paul gave them caution of, saying, *If an Angel from Heaven preach any other Doctrine* (than Infallibility) &c. let him be accurs'd. But what they will say to the Holy Ghost and Spirit of God, for not taking notice of the Prerogative given (as they say) by our Saviour to St. Peter, I cannot imagin; but I suppose the next General Council that's call'd by his supposed Successor, something may be done to be even with Him. But to go on. After the Church began to increase, we read *Acts* the 6. and the 1. verse, *And in those days, when the number of the Disciples was multiplyed, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their Widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* Now any body would think if St. Peter had been invested with such a Power, &c. none more fit to order and appoint Persons for that business, because it might have been done with much less trouble than by assembling the Multitude, which was the method they took, as you may read verse the 2. and 3. of that Chapter, *Then* (not St. Peter, but) *the Twelve, called the multitude of the Disciples unto THEM, and said, It is not reason that WE should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore Brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy Ghost and wisdom, whom* (pray observe) *WE may appoint over this business.* Which was done accordingly, *And when THEY had prayed, THEY laid their hands on them, &c.* And in another Cause different from this, *When the Apostles, which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had receiv'd the word of God, THEY sent unto them Peter and John.* Now this methinks seems very odd for the Chief of the Apostles and Head

Head of the Church, to be sent by his Inferiors as it were of an Errand. So that it is plain the Apostles did not behave themselves as they ought, or else they did not believe any such Authority to be plac'd in St. Peter; but we do not find only the Apostles, but the new Converts contending and chiding (as it were) St. Peter; so that he was forc'd to tell a long Story for his Justification, as you may read *Acts* the 11. from the beginning to the 19. verse, from which 'tis evident THEY had the same opinion of his being the Head of the Church then, as we have of his pretended Successors now. But once more to make (if possible) the Cause more plain, in the 15. of the *Acts*, we have an account of the first Council that ever was held in the Christian Church, where were most, if not all the Apostles, and likewise the occasion of it, as you may read ver. the 1. and 2. *And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissention and disputation with them, they determined Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question: And the Apostles and Elders came together about this matter.* But in all that account we do not find one Syllable of St. Peter's taking Place or exercising any Authority above the rest in this Assembly, nor the rest taking any notice of him in that kind. But when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, &c. verse the 7. So it does not appear that he spake first to the business in hand, for there was much disputation before he began to speak to the matter, and ver. the 12. *Then all the multitude* (which argues there was a great number) *kept silence and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, &c.* And after they had held their peace James answer'd, and said, *Men and Brethren harken unto me.* And so goes on from the 13 to the 22. verse of that chapter; from which we may observe that if any of them was infallible it was St. James; for they all (as you may observe in that Place) seem'd to be

concluded by what he deliver'd; for we do not find that he
 had contradicted him, or so much as spoke against him. But it
 follows, Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders with the whole
 Church (which I suppose was all the Multitude there Assem-
 bled) to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch,
 with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas surnamed Barsabbas,
 and Silas, chief men among the Brethren; And wrote letters by
 them after this manner, The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren
 send greeting unto the Brethren which are of the Gentiles in An-
 tiocch, and Syria, and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard
 that certain which went from us, have troubled you with words,
 subverting your Souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and
 keep the whole Law, to whom we gave no such commandment: It
 seemed good unto US, being assembled with one accord, to send
 chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, verse
 the 22. 23. 24. and 25. of the same 15. of the Acts. And we
 find Paul and those that were with him, as they went through
 the Cities, deliver them the decrees for to keep, that were
 ordain'd of the Apostles and Elders that were at Jerusalem, Acts
 the 16. and 4. verse. Which decrees may possibly rise up in
 Judgment against some body; for if ever any Council was in-
 fallible this was, and the Decrees they made; yet we do not find
 in the least manner, neither by St. Peter nor the rest of the Apo-
 stles, any thing of this Infallible Head-ship pretended to by
 them, which is a strong Argument there was no such Notion
 known in their time, and that which further confirmeth, is that
 Place of St. Paul, Galatians the 2. and 12. ver. But when Pe-
 ter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was
 to be blamed. Now this sounds very strange, What! the Infalli-
 ble Head of the Church, and Prince of the Apostles, in a
 fault that deserv'd such a sharp Reproof, sure St. Paul was in
 an Error and mistaken, or else the pretended Infallible Suc-
 cessors of St. Peter are; for I cannot be perswaded but if St.
 Peter had been but as Infallible as some have made themselves,
 it was impossible for him to do any thing, that might give
 occasion to St. Paul to be angry with him, as no doubt but
 he was, when he withstood him to the face. There is two
 Places.

Please more cannot omit, by reason they are much to the purpose, but I will but name them and hasten to a conclusion; for I did not at first entrance upon this Discourse design to have been so tedious, but the matter being of so great Consequence, I judg'd it necessary to give you, Sir, as full satisfaction as possible I could. *Concerning the 1st Chapter the 12. verse the 28. And God hath set some in the Church, First Apostles, Secondly Prophets, Thirdly Teachers, and so on.* Now if St. Peter had been the Head (as our Romish Friends would perswade us) why should St. Paul omit it in this Place, where he seems to be so exact in distinguishing the Order and Degree that God had set in his Church, by First, Second, and Thirdly, &c. but it is evident he knew nothing of the matter, for if he had, 'tis but reason to suppose he would have given an account of those Orders thus (viz.) God had set some in the Church, First St. Peter the Head, secondly Apostles, Thirdly Prophets, &c. And in the 4th of the *Epistles* ver. the 21. much to the same purpose. *And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers,* but not one word of this infallible Guides which to me, and I hope all unprejudic'd Persons, is a sufficient Proof that no such Power was ever intended by our Saviour to St. Peter, nor that St. Peter did ever own that he had any such Authority, nor the Apostles believe any such matter, which is I think sufficient for the second Inquiry, Whether the Apostles did give Place or Preeminence to St. Peter, as believing him to be the Head of the Church, &c.

And now to Conclude, all they ground their Arguments upon are general Considerations, That there ought to be an infallible Judge, and from thence they would infer our Saviour did possibly InSTITUTE such a one, and the most likely Person was St. Peter, from those words of our Saviour, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, &c.* But the most that this can amount to, is but a favourable Construction of the matter. Now by the same Rule 'tis I hope as rational to presume the contrary, especially from the Consideration of so many Places of Scripture as I have here set down, which do not favour this infallible Doctrine; all which I will draw up to this one single Point
(viz.)

(*etc.*) either our Saviour did, or he did not, invest any one with such an Authority, as we have been discoursing of; then indeed or not we are both agreed, but which is the Point to be considered. Now in all Causes where there is not plain Matter of Fact, the strongest and most probable Circumstances ought to be considered on both sides; and upon this if they please we will by consent join Issue, and appeal to the Impartial, Equitable Court of right Reason and Understanding, to decide the Controversie; to which I will offer but one Argument more, and leave the whole, Sir, to your own Consideration, and that is the great advantage such an Infalible Head would have been to the Christian World; so that 'tis morally impossible to suppose our Saviour would have been wanting in a thing of so extraordinary a concern, or (which is much the same) to deliver so necessary a Point so obscurely, as none but the *Roman* Catholick should understand him. But I do not envy their infalible discovery of things that can be neither felt, heard, nor understood; others may do as they please but for my part, (we now having Liberty of Conscience) I must beg leave to dissent from them in those Matters, let them pretend to be never so infalible. And now by what has been said, I hope, Sir, you are satisfied of my Opinion touching the Infalibility of the Church of *Rome*; and though I have not mov'd or shaken this Babel touching Structure, which reaches (as that was intended) from Earth to Heaven, by reason of its Rocky (I had almost said Rotten) Foundation, yet I hope I have in part made good my Promise of lifting some Rubbish out of the way, whereby it may by a more skillful Engenieer be the better undermined, and at last blown up in its own Element (for the Notion of it is but Air) and I dare be bold, without the help of the Stars, to predict the same. Which all at present, save only your pardon for my being so tedious, and that my weak Endeavour may (like the Widows Mite) meet with a gracious Acceptance, is the only desire of,

Sir,

Your true

1687.

Your truly Obedt^t & Humble, &c.

FINIS.

(*etc.*)

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